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ABSTRACT

During its infancy period, humanistic education was strongly influenced and nurtured by T-Group and Human Relations Training, along with the personal growth and encounter activities of the human potential movement. As it moved into childhood, humanistic education recognized the need for more practical methods of implementing its new ideas and adopted a wealth of activities, including values clarification, role play, fantasy, Gestalt therapy, and a broad range of communication skills, designed to incorporate an affective component into the classroom. As humanistic education becomes a young adult, its methods are being incorporated into the teaching of basic skills and integrated into a broad range of educational programs for adults. (Author)

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FOCUS ON ADULTS

Jean Haskell Feinberg, Ed.D.

(For presentation at APA Convention, August 28, 1978)

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HUMANISTIC APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING: FOCUS ON ADULTS

Jean Haskell Feinberg, Ed.D.

Having gone through a series of developmental phases, Humanistic Education has now reached young adulthood. Appropriately, its methods and concepts are being incorporated into educational programs for adults. I will briefly outline the developmental phases, as I see them, and describe some of the innovative humanistic programs for adults in the Phil elphia area.

Humanistic Education was born about 16 years ago in response to a crying need for change in the schools. Among its parents and grandparents were: Carl Rogers and other Third Force Psychologists; Gerald Weinstein and Mario Fantini of the University of Massachusetts; Norman Newberg and Terry Borton of the School District of Philadelphia; and George Isaac Brown of the University of California in Santa Barbara. With varied approaches they all sought to make education relevant to student concerns, give it personal meaning, involve the affective domain, and provide an opportunity for self-fulfillment.

In its infancy, Humanistic Education was jointly influenced and nurtured by human relations training and the encounter group movement. A major objective seemed to be to enable teachers to express feelings, so that they, in turn, would encourage students to express feelings. "If we can just get teachers into T-Groups, or Encounter Groups," was the hue and cry, "they'll see how easy it is to use them in the classroom!" However, few teachers or children were prepared to cope with as unstructured a situation as a T-Group in the classroom, and

after several years, humanistic education recognized that teachers needed more effective technologies in order to implement its ideas.

Moving into childhood, Humanistic Education went exploring and brought home a wealth of activities, among which were values clarification, games, magic circle (Bessell and Palomares, 1968), fantasy, role play, ways to enhance self-concept, group dynamics, and a broad range of communication skills designed to elicit and respond to feelings in the classroom. Some teachers were excited by the new activities and able to integrate them into the classroom. Others viewed them as "fillers"--to fill up the empty places in the lesson plan. Still others refused to become involved with that "touchy-feely stuff that doesn't belong in the classroom."

Humanistic Education persisted, and was able to establish itself in some school systems; it got money to conduct research studies on its impact; and it began to write books linking the many humanistically oriented activities with a theoretical framework. As it moved into adolescence, it began to seek a firmer identity of its own. It raised new and more profound questions, such as "How can I integrate affective concepts into the teaching of basic skills and traditional subject matter?" "How can I have more impact on more people?"

Carrying the developmental analogy through to the present day, I see Humanistic Education now becoming a young adult. It has given up some of its fun and games, and taken on the major task of helping schools utilize the affective domain as a way of more effectively teaching what they are mandated to teach. Thus, in schools across the country, humanistic approaches are now incorporated into the teaching of basic skills, as well as traditional subject matter,

such as literature and science. More and more emphasis is being placed on how students learn, rather than on what they learn, and on teaching process skills along with cognitive material (Newberg and Levin, 1974). Some attention is also being paid to reorganizing entire schools within a humanistic framework (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1974).

Concepts and methods of humanistic education are being used in a variety of ways to enable adults to learn, both for their own growth and for their work with children. Malcolm Knowles (1977) describes adult learners as self-directed, experienced problem solvers who like to make immediate application of what they learn, yet who often fall back into being dependent when they enter a learning situation. His prescriptions for effective adult education programs bear striking parallels to the values and technologies that we call Humanistic Education.

One of the most innovative programs for adults, developed by the Affective Education Development Program of the School District of Philadelphia, is the School For All Ages. As its name implies, the School For All Ages is a school where students of all ages, from 5 to 75, and thus all generations, go to school together.

The concept of a trans-generational school was developed in response to three serious problems confronting American society: first, the increasing tendency toward age segregation in families and communities; secondly, the imbalance between cooperation, competition, independence, and dependence in education, and in society; and, thirdly, the inadequacy of opportunities and support for adults, particularly in low socio-economic groups, to re-enter

the educational process.

The School For All Ages is a model for a school where adults, who had felt trapped in low socio-economic groups, and with little or no education, can attend in their own neighborhoods, along with their children, during the day, to learn basic skills and/or work toward a high school diploma. It opened its doors in an inner city Philadelphia neighborhood in February of 1975, and now has approximately 195 students, 175 youngsters, grades K through 12, and 20 adults, age 21 to 76, who are in grades 2 through 12. The population, balanced by age and race, is 60% Black, 22% White, and 18% Puerto Rican and other. The staff is comprised of a principal, 9 teachers who took a special examination for the position and received extensive training, 8 teacher assistants, adults who are enrolled in a college program in child care, and an adult resource leader. Attendance at the school is voluntary and all adults living in the community are eligible to attend. Many enroll to work toward a high school diploma, while some want to brush up on specific basic skills. Upon admission, adults are tested for placement levels, and attend classes according to individual schedules set up to meet the adult's particular needs and time available, as well as graduation requirements. Every adult takes English, math, and social studies and is grouped with his or her grade level, which includes youngsters who span a three to five year age range. A special part of their course work is the Life Experience Project in which each individual describes his or her life learnings and patterns.

The heart of the school is the cross-age learning experience. In addition to regular academic classes, adults participate in one or more other types of cross-age teaching/learning groups. First, called the Cross-Age Learning Group, or Family Group, is a mixture of elementary, junior high, high school and adult students who meet for 45 minutes every day. Activities often parallel those of a family, such as family outings or excursions, in-house "fix up" projects, or community service activities. Secondly, students participate in Cross-Age Interest Groups, which may include ethnic cooking, stamp collecting, yoga, jogging, fashion design, or automobile repair, depending on the interests of students and capabilities of teachers. A third major activity for cross-age grouping is tutoring, which operates in two different ways. In one plan, secondary classes tutor elementary classes under the guidance and supervision of the teachers of both classes several times per week. Under the second plan, individual students volunteer to be tutors and are assigned to work with younger students several times a week. In both cases, tutors receive special training and meet together for ongoing problem solving.

The Cross-Age Learning Group provides a model for ways in which families might learn to live together humanistically. The group seems to develop a natural rhythm, closely paralleling that of a large family, in which cross-aging sometimes takes place due to parental directives, at other times spontaneously. There is the opportunity for all age groups to explore different behaviors towards each other and to transfer the learnings from school to home. Skills can be valued and pooled to accomplish projects; olders learn more

by explaining tasks to youngers. Group members are encouraged to develop different kinds of helping roles, and function interdependently; while at the same time they often engage in inter-family competition. Time is set aside to process the cross-age activities and their implications for the lives of the students.

Adults also participate in an adults-only weekly support group in which they learn problem solving skills, effective parenting, and time and life management, or "how to hold it all together when you have to be mother, father, homemaker, wage earner, and student!" Another component of the school is the Career Change Program, through which the Teacher Assistants can explore career changes by working in the school while pursuing a college degree in child care. Said one student, "I had a job doing laboring work, which was so very hard, and I felt that if I could get my high school diploma I could get a job which wasn't so hard."

Research on the School For All Ages indicates that there has been significant impact on the students, both in terms of life learnings and academic skills. The impact on life learnings was measured by the Cross-Age Interview form, which indicated that students understood and were able to give examples of learnings from both older and younger school-mates. Adult students express enthusiasm about the academic and personal learnings resulting from mixed-age classes, and appreciate the opportunity to attend during the day. Said one adult student, "At this school, I'm finally beginning to learn some math. It's the first time I have some self-confidence, so I don't freeze up when I take a test. And you learn things about getting along with your own kids."

Younger students indicate that adults inspire them to stay in school, to work hard, and are role models for appropriate behavior. Said one younster, "Adults coming back shows me what their mistake was, so I think twice about dropping out now." And another, "I do better because I know my mother checks on me. We walk home and have a chance to talk about what we did in school."

Teachers indicate that adult students act as resources for younger students, and that their presence often improves pupil behavior. Academic skills are measured by the California Achievement Test scores, which show a steady increase from year to year, both in the school and in relation to national norms. In general, adults in their early 20's are less successful than those 28 and over; and parents of infants are less successful than parents of school age children.

In the past, providing schooling for adults who had not graduated from high school was a small piece of the educational pie, and usually involved adults-only classes held at night. Now, for a variety of reasons, it appears that school systems may soon be required to offer all adults the opportunity to work toward a high school diploma. It will become more and more important to incorporate adults into the educational scene in ways that will be educationally sound and enhance their lives and the lives of their families.

A second major program for adults, developed by the Philadelphia Affective Education Development Program, is Parent Education. The concept of educating parents was developed in response to, first, the increasing alienation from schools experienced by most parents, and, secondly, the impact of the discrepant messages that students

in humanistically-oriented programs appeared to be getting from home and from school. For example, teachers were becoming less authoritarian and were providing opportunities for students to make decisions and take responsibility for what they wanted to learn; while at home those same students were chastized for disagreeing with the authority figures. Thus, it seemed appropriate to provide an orientation for parents, along with training in humanistic parenting.

Initial programs for parents were derived from Gordon's (1971) Parent Effectiveness Training, which taught listening skills, problem solving, and conflict resolution. This seemed to work for middle-class parents; however, parents from lower socio-economic groups lacked the more basic understandings of how to be a parent, and the ways in which parents play a major role in their children's success in school. In one study, parents in low socio-economic groups were encouraged to talk to their children at the dinner table--"table talk" (Newberg, 1978 Those children whose parents "table talked" on a regular basis did better in both reading readiness tests and learning to read than did children whose parents did not talk to them. Thus, the Parent Education Program now focuses on such areas as how to play with a child, how to have fun with children, how to teach children to recognize letters and colors; and, perhaps most vital, an understanding of the ways in which family scripts determine patterns for success or failure of family members, and how to change the failure patterns. The activity used most frequently for initiating this change is the success fantasy. Most of us know what failure fantasies are like; we have an easy time fantasizing failure or disaster, and can usually run through a whole series of "what if" statements, eg., "What if they don't like

my paper? What if they are bored? What if I forget something? What if I lose my voice" and so on. By changing the "what ifs" it is possible to begin to fantasize what it would be like to succeed and make success a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, I can change those "what ifs" to "What if they love my paper? What if they give me a standing ovation? What if they invite me to deliver it again in San Francisco...or London?" etc., etc. The approach enables many children and adults to believe that they can succeed.

Parents in the education programs meet once a week for 10 weeks, two hours per session, in their own neighborhoods, and at times that are most convenient for them. As it is generally difficult to motivate parents to attend, they are given incentives such as money for baby-sitting, and books, note-books and crayons. These materials place stress on the value of having something of one's own that is relevant to the learning situation. Initially, all training was conducted in the schools by a staff member. During the 1977-78 year, however, the staff trained a group of parents to be trainers; they will now go into the homes and work directly with parents and children on their own turf. Primary emphasis is on helping children to succeed in school, and on how to organize the emotional or attitudinal components of learning to increase the chances for success. One specific goal is to have each parent spend 15 minutes with each child, at least four or five days a week, doing something together that is fun. To date, there is definitive evidence that the children of parents who have participated in parent education groups do significantly better in school than the

other children in the same classroom.

Two new parent education programs that will get underway this Fall are a support group for parents of students going away to college, and a group for teenage fathers, certainly a long-neglected part of the population!

Two totally different types of humanistic education programs for adults are (1) the Marywood College/Mainland Institute Master's Degree Program, and (2) a Doctoral program at Temple University.

The Marywood College/Mainland Institute Program is administered by Mainland Institute, in suburban Philadelphia. Initially, Mainland offered in-service courses in humanistic education for teachers; among them were courses in affective communication skills, group processes, the Magic Circle and the "no-failure classroom" (Glasser, 1969). All courses were designed to provide teachers with a philosophical approach to humanistic education, along with some technologies for implementation. Courses were given on weekends, and teachers received credit through Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania.

Two years ago Mainland Institute and Marywood College combined their resources to create the program through which teachers are awarded a Master of Science in Education Degree with a concentration in Humanistic Studies. Teachers and workers in the helping professions may apply to the program through Mainland Institute. Applicants are required to have one basic course in Effective Communication for Teachers and to take the Graduate Record Exam or the Miller Analogies Test; acceptance is based on professional recommendations, undergraduate grades, and a personal assessment by the director and staff of the program. Thirty-six hours of graduate credit are required to

complete the Master's Degree. This includes required core courses in Research Theory, Learning Theory, and Anthropology of Education, as well as an Integrative Seminar. Also required are courses in Effective Communication for Teachers, Values Clarification or Methods in Human Development, and Group Processes. In addition, every student is required to take a Comprehensive Examination, and to make a major contribution to the field in the form of an individual project.

Structurally, though a few courses are taught in traditional format, the program provides a model, for its students, of a humanistic teaching/learning environment. The heart of the model is the CORE group of 20 students who, with an experienced advisor/facilitator, meet every other week for four hours. Two hours are core course input, such as Learning Theory, and two are given over to group building, project planning, problem solving, theoretical input, and/or other work to meet the collaboratively determined needs of the members of the group. It is in the CORE group that the skilled advisor works hand-in-hand with the students to create a climate for open communication, self-disclosure and feedback, thus providing an unique opportunity for relevant learning as well as personal and professional growth.

Within each CORE group are approximately three PEER groups, of six or seven persons each, who live in geographical proximity. The PEER group must meet for a minimum of 12 hours per semester, on its own. Activities are of their own choice and may include discussion and feedback on projects, shared readings, problem solving, etc. This becomes an opportunity for more indepth sharing and

learning among professional peers, and may often generate life-long colleague-ships.

The CORE group has a life span of one year, during which students must complete all core courses and read a variety of books. Students are required to complete their professional project by the end of a second year. Five CORE groups operate concurrently, in different geographical areas, and approximately 100 students have completed the program each year.

This Master's program is a rigorous one, requiring energy, hard work, and major inputs from its students, while offering them an opportunity for creativity and pursuit of individual interests. Exemplary projects run the gamut from traditional research studies to (1) a complete about-to-be-published children's book, (2) a game designed to teach divergent and convergent thinking, (3) "School-opoly," a game designed to teach basic skills, and (4) an eighth-grade math curriculum that was rewritten to incorporate affective concepts and life-coping skills, such as how to handle a bank account.

Somewhat similar in approach is an alternative doctoral program in Temple University's College of Education. Twenty-seven students, from five departments (Adult Education, Psychoeducational Processes, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, and Urban Education) comprise the Humanistic Education Group, a learning-support group of students who are working on the doctorate together. The program is specifically designed to offset the impersonalization and alienation of most doctoral programs. While each student must meet the course requirements of his or her particular department, all 27 students also meet once each week for 6 hours per week, in year one,

and 3 hours per week in year two. Their objective is to become a model of student-centered, self-directed learning that is personally and professionally relevant. Activities have included studies in self-validation, organization development in schools, reading groups, and cognitive or experiential presentations by class members.

Finally, and briefly, the Institute of Awareness is a unique learning center founded 10 years ago to provide educational opportunities for women who could attend classes during the daytime. Over the years it has expanded and now includes day and evening courses for women as well as courses for men and couples. Both experiential and cognitive courses are offered. Experiential classes have a heavy emphasis on personal growth, such as "Self-Discovery Without A Hassle," "Coping With Transitions," "Interpersonal Communications," or "Assertiveness Training"; they are small in number and learning is based on personal participation and interaction among members of the group and the leader. Cognitive classes, which may include "Practical Law and Money," or "The Role of the Media in Today's World," are larger and more lecture-like in style. Many courses combine the cognitive and the experiential, such as Parapsychology or Meditation; while some courses are designed to meet the needs of specific groups, such as Single Parents or Widows. Institute of Awareness classes generally have a high impact on their students, particularly on women who have been at home with children and seek new ways to enrich their lives. Among the reactions from students are "This course changed my life!" "It was the most exciting thing that ever happened to me!" or "Now I have the courage to go back to school!".

In summary, I have described several major innovative programs through which adults are learning and growing in meaningful ways. I have long believed that the concepts of Humanistic Education can provide a model for social change in this country. However, it is not enough to work with children; as we begin to make the education of adults more meaningful, perhaps we can move closer to becoming a more humanistic society. In my own work I seek to carry the values of Humanistic Education into the training and development programs of large industrial systems. One of my personal goals is to see large corporations begin to underwrite such programs as, perhaps, trans-generational schools in their own communities.

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